

SUMMER • 2007

Veterans' Health

THE WELLNESS MAGAZINE
FOR OHIO VETERANS

Keeping
women vets
healthy

Bye-bye,
back pain

VA Healthcare
System of Ohio



To our readers

Welcome to summer! It's a time to take to the outdoors, so do not let back pain spoil your warm-weather fun.



In this issue, we will tell you how to take care of your back and provide prevention tips, exercises and advice on when to call your healthcare provider if your pain does not get better.

Keeping your eyes healthy is important, too. VA Healthcare System of Ohio offers diabetic retinopathy screening for veterans with diabetes. Turn to page 3 for more information.

On pages 4 and 5, we remind all veterans—including women and those recently discharged—to turn to VA for quality healthcare that meets their unique needs. All returnees receive no-cost healthcare for two years after active duty, and female veterans have healthcare services available just for them.

Have a healthy summer!

Jack Hetrick

—Jack Hetrick, Network Director



About our mailing list

We make every effort to ensure our mailing lists are accurate. If you have questions or would like to be added to or deleted from the list, let us know. Please include your entire address. To make a change, you *must* mail the mailing panel to:

Veterans' Health

VA Healthcare System of Ohio Network Office

11500 Northlake Drive, Suite 200

Cincinnati, OH 45249

Veterans' Health is online at www.visn10.va.gov. Visit this site to view back issues or subscribe.

Facility inspections planned

The Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) will conduct an unannounced triennial accreditation survey of all VHA facilities. Additionally, a one-day unannounced survey may occur at any time.

These surveys evaluate the organization's compliance with nationally established JCAHO standards. Anyone who has pertinent and valid information about such matters may contact JCAHO by phone at 1-800-994-6610, by e-mail at complaint@jcaho.org or by writing to:

Division on Accreditation Operations

Office of Quality Monitoring

Joint Commission on Accreditation

of Healthcare Organizations

1 Renaissance Blvd.

Oakbrook Terrace, IL 60181

What is MRSA?

MRSA—methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*—is a staph bacteria that cannot be killed with the antibiotic methicillin. Learn more about MRSA and how you can protect yourself in the next issue of *Veterans' Health*.

Veterans' Health is published quarterly as a patient education service by VA Healthcare System of Ohio, one of the 21 integrated networks of the Department of Veterans Affairs. The publication is intended to provide information to help you stay well, manage your healthcare and learn about the many health services available through VA. This publication is not intended as a substitute for professional medical advice, which should be obtained from your doctor. All articles may be reproduced for educational purposes.

The Mission of VA Healthcare System of Ohio is:

- To provide veterans a continuum of care that is accessible, value-added and cost-effective, and of the highest quality, within an environment of outstanding education and research.
- To promote a culture that supports and develops a caring, compassionate, competent and quality-oriented workforce.

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Keeping good vision in sight

Diabetes can damage blood vessels in all parts of the body, including your eyes. When blood vessels in the retina or inside the back of the eye are damaged, it is called diabetic retinopathy. The warning signs of diabetic retinopathy include blurred vision that lasts more than a day; loss of vision in either eye; and spots, lines or flashing lights in the field of vision.

“If not treated, diabetic retinopathy can lead to blindness,” says Stacia S. Yaniglos, O.D., chief of optometry at Cleveland VA Medical Center. “The trick is to diagnose it early.”

Get screened for diabetic retinopathy

Teleretinal imaging (TRI) is a new service offered by VA Healthcare System of Ohio to screen for diabetic retinopathy. Veterans with diabetes whose VA records do not show an eye exam in the last year are eligible for this screening. Your primary care provider can tell you during your regular visit if you need TRI.

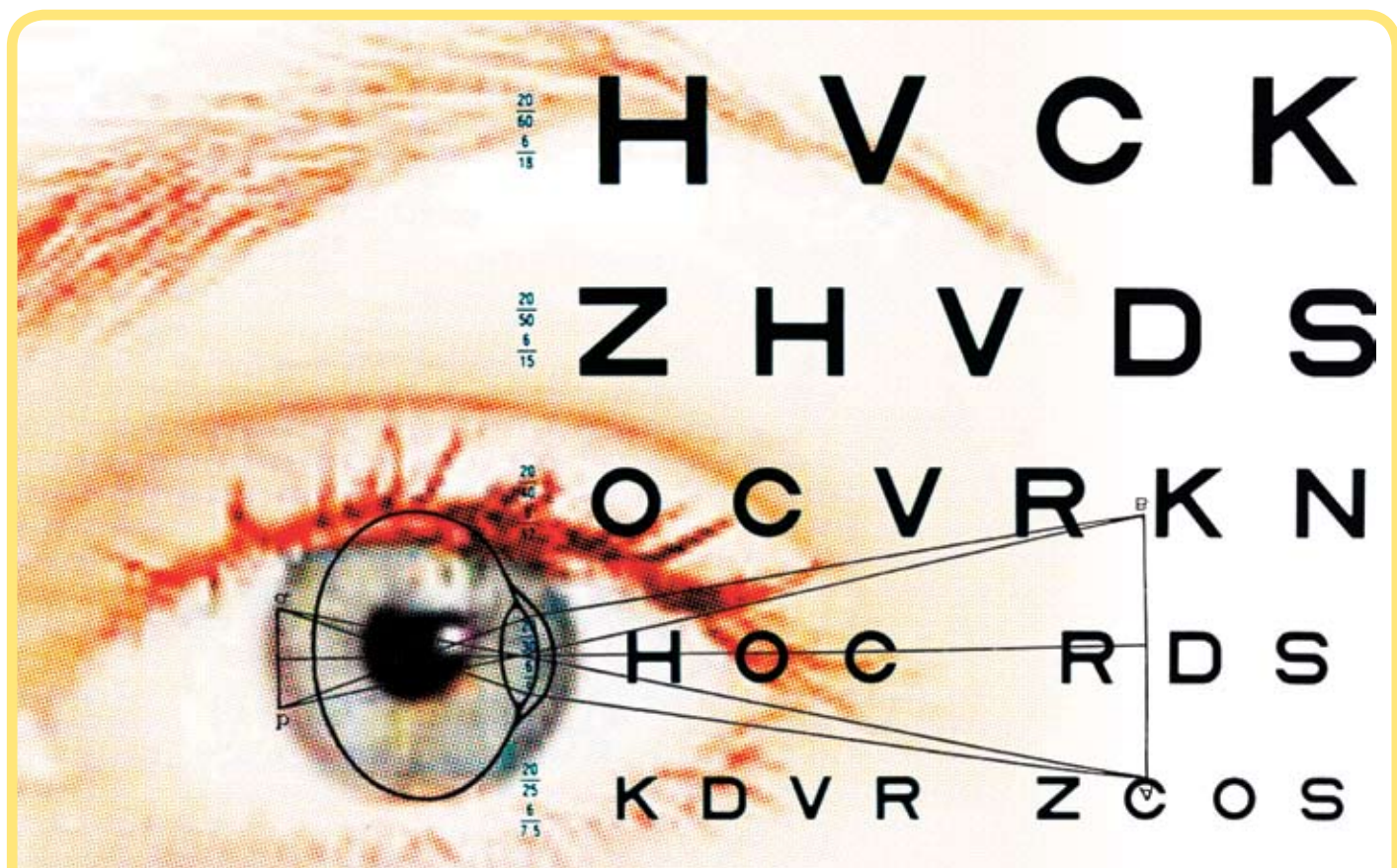
“The goal is to detect diabetic retinopathy at an early stage by providing easy access to TRI technology,” says Dr. Yaniglos. To make this possible, there are 13 cameras throughout the VA system in Ohio.

“Patients due for the screening are sent to the nearest facility with TRI,” says Dr. Yaniglos. “TRI uses a camera to take pictures of the back of the eye.”

The exam takes 15 to 30 minutes. The pictures are sent to an optometrist to be checked. You will receive a letter or phone call with the results and be assisted in making arrangements for needed follow-up visits. TRI **does not** take the place of a full eye exam. Be sure to make and keep your appointment for yearly eye exams.

“Prompt evaluation and treatment are important to help veterans with diabetes keep good vision,” says Dr. Yaniglos. “TRI helps us do that.”

To learn more, contact your local VA medical center or outpatient clinic. **VH**





Just for you

VA helps keep women vets healthy

When the number of female veterans began to rise more than a decade ago, VA began offering women-specific healthcare, including: Pap tests, mammograms, reproductive healthcare and maternity services. To promote the health, welfare and dignity of women veterans, The Center for Women Veterans ensures access to quality healthcare.

A wide range of services

At VA healthcare facilities, women veterans have a team of providers dedicated to their health and wellness. A full range of services are offered, including:

- health promotion and disease prevention
- primary care
- women-specific healthcare
- maternity and infertility care
- acute medical/surgical services
- emergency care
- substance abuse treatment
- mental healthcare
- domiciliary, rehabilitative and

long-term care **VH**

Take charge of your health

Women veterans, VA wants you to take advantage of the health services at your local VA. Doing so can help you prevent disease and stay healthy throughout all stages of your life.

For more information about services available in your area, visit your VA healthcare facility, call toll-free **1-877-222-VETS (8387)** or visit **www.va.gov/womenvet**.



Recently discharged?

Contact VA!

Did you know that every military returnee receives no-cost healthcare from VA for two years after leaving active duty? The more than 588,000 Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom (OIF/OEF) veterans need to be informed about their VA healthcare benefits, as many have not yet enrolled with VA.

Help for wounded veterans

More than 25,000 OIF/OEF veterans have been wounded in action since 2001. VA has special programs to address traumatic brain injury (TBI). Veterans with TBI need continued follow-up after discharge from military hospitals. TBI may be subtle

and may not appear until after discharge, with symptoms such as changes in behavior and learning problems. The risk for post-traumatic stress

disorder (PTSD) is greater when someone has TBI.

If you—or someone you know—is an OIF/OEF veteran, call or visit your local VA and ask for the OIF/OEF point of contact or coordinator. **VA**

More than just healthcare

The transition from active duty to civilian life can sometimes be a difficult one. Not all veterans return to good jobs or a place to call home after they trade their uniforms for civilian clothes. It does not have to be that way: VA can help veterans find jobs and homes. If you know a veteran who needs help, call the homeless coordinator at your local VA healthcare facility.

A close-up photograph of a person's lower back and right arm. The person's right hand is clutching their lower back, indicating pain. The background is blurred, showing what appears to be a window or a bright outdoor area.

Bye-bye, back pain

Rare is the person who goes through life without some sort of back pain. “Approximately four out of five people will experience back pain in their lifetime,” says physical therapist Alice Holder, M.H.S., physical therapy/occupational therapy services supervisor and VA Healthcare System of Ohio traumatic brain injury coordinator at Cincinnati VA Medical Center.

Low-back pain can have many causes, including poor posture, excess weight, mental stress that leads to muscle tension, muscle strain, a torn ligament or a slipped disk. However, an inactive lifestyle is the most frequent reason for back pain.

“Prolonged sitting or standing, being out of shape, jobs that require repetitive movements or suddenly asking your back to lift or bend in ways it is not used to can cause pain,” says Holder. “The majority of back problems we see are sprains or strains from poor posture habits, lack of conditioning and lifting heavy objects.”

The smartest approach to pain? Prevention.

“A day spent moving furniture or gardening can lead to painful spasms if you have not been exercising regularly,” says Holder.

An active lifestyle, which includes specific exercises to strengthen your back, is your best bet when it comes to preventing injury. Staying fit has another benefit, too: It can help you burn calories and lose weight. Carrying around extra pounds strains back muscles and compresses the disks in your lower back. A big belly moves your center of gravity forward, making muscles work harder to support the spine.

Read on for some tips to prevent back pain.

Back to basics

Perfect your posture. Proper posture is one of the first lines of defense against back pain. Keep your ears above your shoulders, your shoulders above your hips and your hips above your knees and feet.

When sitting, preserve the curve in your lower back by tucking a rolled towel behind you. Get up

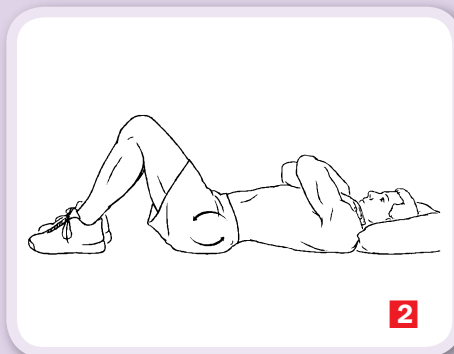


Exercises for a bad back

Physical therapist Alice Holder, M.H.S., recommends these exercises for a strained back. Do them once or twice a day. Do not go beyond the point where you feel pain.

1 Lie on your back with your knees bent and feet on the floor. Bring one knee at a time up and toward your chest, holding behind your thigh until you feel a stretch in your low back. Hold for five to 10 seconds, return and repeat on the other side. Repeat one to three times.

2 While in the same position, gently rock your pelvic area by flattening your low back into the floor and then gently arching it. Repeat 10 to 20 times.



When to call a doctor

See your healthcare provider if you experience any of these symptoms in addition to your back pain, or if your pain persists for more than two weeks or is so bad you can't perform your normal activities:

- radiating pain, such as pain that goes down your leg
- loss of bowel or bladder function
- numbness or tingling in your leg, foot, groin or rectum
- sweating, nausea or weakness

at least once an hour to stretch. At work, make sure your desk and computer keyboard are at comfortable heights so you don't have to hunch forward. When you drive, pull your seat forward so that the brake, gas pedal and steering wheel are easy to reach.

Lift it right. Use your legs, not your back, to lift heavy objects. Place one foot slightly ahead of the other, bend your knees, tighten your stomach muscles and pick up the load and lift, keeping your back straight and the object close to your body.

"Push objects rather than pulling on them," says Holder. "And avoid twisting and bending at the same time."

Don't sleep on it. The best way to spend the night? Lying on your side, a pillow tucked between your knees. Avoid sleeping on your stomach, and if you must sleep on your back, put a pillow under your knees.

If you are prone to back trouble, do not just pop right out of bed. Instead, roll onto your side, bend both knees and drop your feet over the side as you push up with both arms to a sitting position. Scoot to the edge of the bed and stand.

Where to get help

VA Healthcare System of Ohio offers physical therapy to veterans on a referral basis for acute, outpatient, rehabilitation and extended care needs. Physical therapy services, available on all campuses, must be requested by your primary care provider or treatment team. **VH**

Reaching us is easy

Keep this information handy—when you need us, we'll be there.

Chillicothe VAMC

17273 State Route 104
Chillicothe, OH 45601
740-773-1141

Community-Based Outpatient Clinics

Athens

510 West Union Street
Athens, OH 45701
740-593-7314

Cambridge

2145 Southgate
Cambridge, OH 43725
740-432-1963

Lancaster

1550 Sheridan Drive, Suite 100
Colonnade Medical Building
Lancaster, OH 43130
740-653-6145

Marietta

418 Colegate Drive
Marietta, OH 45750
740-568-0412

Portsmouth

621 Broadway Street
Portsmouth, OH 45662
740-353-3236

Cincinnati VAMC

3200 Vine Street
Cincinnati, OH 45220
513-861-3100

Ft. Thomas VA Campus

1000 So. Ft. Thomas Avenue
Ft. Thomas, KY 41075
859-572-6202

Community-Based Outpatient Clinics

Bellevue

103 Landmark Drive
Bellevue, KY 41073
859-392-3840

Clermont County

Eastgate Professional
Office Park
4355 Ferguson Drive, Suite 270
Cincinnati, OH 45245
513-943-3680

Dearborn County

1600 Flossie Drive
Greendale IN 47025
812-539-2313

Florence, KY

7711 Ewing Blvd.
Florence, KY 41042
859-282-4480

Louis Stokes Wade Park VAMC

10701 East Boulevard
Cleveland, OH 44106
216-791-3800

Brecksville VA Medical Center

10000 Brecksville Road
Brecksville, OH 44141
440-526-3030

Community-Based Outpatient Clinics

Akron

55 West Waterloo
Akron, OH 44319
330-724-7715

Canton

733 Market Avenue South
Canton, OH 44702
330-489-4600

East Liverpool

Ogilvie Square
15655 State Route 170
Circleville, OH 43920
330-386-4303

Lorain

205 West 20th Street
Lorain, OH 44052
440-244-3833

Mansfield

1456 Park Avenue West
Mansfield, OH 44906
419-529-4602

McCafferty

4242 Lorain Avenue
Cleveland, OH 44113
216-939-0699

New Philadelphia

1260 Monroe Avenue, #15H
New Philadelphia, OH 44663
330-602-5339

Painesville

7 West Jackson Street
Painesville, OH 44077
440-357-6740

Ravenna

6751 North Chestnut Street
Ravenna, OH 44266
330-296-3641

Sandusky

3416 Columbus Avenue
Sandusky, OH 44870
419-625-7350

Warren

Riverside Square
1400 Tod Avenue NW
Warren, OH 44485
330-392-0311

Youngstown

2031 Belmont Avenue
Youngstown, OH 44505
330-740-9200

Chalmers P. Wylie Outpatient Clinic

543 Taylor Avenue
Columbus, OH 43203
614-257-5200

Community-Based Outpatient Clinics

Grove City

1953 Ohio Avenue
Grove City, OH 43123
614-257-8800

Marion

1203 Delaware Avenue
Marion, OH 43302
740-223-8089

Newark

1912 Tamarack Rd.
Newark, OH 43055
740-788-8329

Zanesville

840 Bethesda Drive
Building 3A
Zanesville, OH 43701
740-453-7725

Dayton VAMC

4100 West Third Street
Dayton, OH 45428
937-268-6511

Community-Based Outpatient Clinics

Lima

1303 Bellefontaine Avenue
Lima, OH 45804
419-222-5788

Middletown

675 North University Boulevard
Middletown, OH 45042
513-423-8387

Richmond

4351 South A Street
Richmond, IN 47374
765-973-6915

Springfield

512 South Burnett Road
Springfield, OH 45505
937-328-3385

Call Tele-Nurse at 1-888-838-6446. • Visit us online at www.visn10.va.gov

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